

Date: April 27, 2013

Dear Michigan House of Representative, House Education Committee Member

This is a letter of testimony in response to HB4465 introduced by Representative McBrown of the Michigan House Education Committee. The Committee is working to modify the High School Merit Standard Curriculum. These modifications may increase school cost savings through curriculum flexibility and reduction in overall curriculum credit requirements to graduate. As you work through this process, I urge you to reconsider substituting extracurricular athletics for physical education credit. Three justifications to maintain the ½ credit of physical education in the HSMSC are explained below.

First, empirical evidence indicates a strong relationship between an increased level of physical activity and reduction of medical costs. For example, the U.S. Medical Expenditure Panel Survey found that obesity is responsible for close to 10 percent of medical costs – nearly \$86 billion a year! Other reports estimate the costs up to \$147 billion a year. The unique attribute is that these costs are 100% preventable, as a relationship exists between a quality physical education program and lifelong physical activity participation. In fact, the purpose of physical education is to teach students the physical and behavioral skills needed to be physically active throughout the lifespan. Extracurricular activities will not achieve the primary objective of physical education. For example, how often do mature adults participate in a game of football or a wrestling match?

Second, the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention recognizes the health-related benefits of regular physical activity and the development of motor skills to participate in lifelong fitness. For example, evidence from laboratory-based studies, as well as large-scale, population-based observational studies indicate that minimum levels of physical activity decreases all-cause mortality, cardiovascular and coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, low back pain, depression and anxiety, and increase of quality of life. In a response to these findings, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) issued the updated Healthy People 2020 – a document to guide policy makers in promoting healthy behaviors. Several Healthy People 2020 objectives are related to increasing physical activity. For example, Objective PA-3 is to increase the number of adolescents who meet current Federal physical activity guidelines for aerobic physical activity and muscle-strengthening activity. The implications of this document are profound and wide sweeping. For example, billions of tax payer's dollars will be distributed to fund physical activity promoting programs across the nation. We, as a nation, should work together at all levels to meet these objectives.

Finally, empirical research provides evidence of a relationship between physical fitness and academic performance. For example, a recent study found students who had a higher aerobic capacity earned higher math scores than students with lower aerobic capacity. A 2004 California Department of Education study, using data from a standardized health-related fitness testing protocol and the California Standards Tests, indicated a strong positive relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement. A 2007-08 study of more than 2.4 million Texas students found that students who were physically fit were more likely to do well on the state's standardized tests, have better school attendance records, and fewer disciplinary referrals than students who were not physically fit. In 2009, the New York City Health Department and Department of Education reported that physical fitness was associated with higher academic achievement among their public school students. As many stakeholders are interested in improving standardized tests scores, all evidence indicates that physical education is a positive, rather than a negative contributor to academic success.

Using the above mentioned pieces of evidence, I testify that removing the ½ credit for physical education will result in adverse health and academic effects. Please provide the best education opportunities for the children of Michigan by retaining the ½ credit requirement in HSMSC.

Sincerely,

Jason C. Bishop, Ph.D., CAPE
Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator
Physical Education Teacher Education
Northern Michigan University
jabishop@nmu.edu
434-422-0766